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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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1. Mideast
2. Intellectual Property Rights

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Key stories in the media:  
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The Jerusalem Post and Israel Radio reported that at a press conference with the foreign media last night, PM Ehud Olmert hinted

at the prospect of secret talks with Syria. He was quoted as saying: "I hope that they [the Syrians] are prepared to make peace with Israel, and I hope that the circumstances will allow us to sit together. That doesn't mean that when we sit together, you have to see us." The Jerusalem Post quoted Alon Liel, a former director-general of the Foreign Ministry who is lobbying the government to open talks with Syria, as saying that while he did not know of any direct secret talks taking place now, it was an open secret that Turkey was passing messages between Damascus and

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Jerusalem.

Israel Hayom (lead story) and Ha'aretz quoted PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas as saying as saying on Wednesday that the talks between chief Palestinian negotiator Ahmed Qurei and FM Tzipi Livni are tackling "all the core issues without exception: Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, borders, and security." "We hope to achieve a settlement in 2008, there are many obstacles but we hope they will be removed. We are all pressing to reach a settlement by the target date," Abbas was quoted as saying. He said settlement building in and around Jerusalem, and IDF checkpoints and raids were blocking progress towards achieving a deal by the end of this year. Ha'aretz reported that Abbas is due to meet with President Bush in Washington next month to advance the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations.

Ha'aretz's Internet site quoted Defense Minister Ehud Barak as saying on Wednesday he had agreed to the transfer of new vehicles and equipment to Abbas's security forces and to ease travel restrictions for West Bank businesses. Citing fear of militant infiltrations, however, Barak signaled he would continue to resist Palestinian and Western demands for mass removals of checkpoints and roadblocks that restrict travel and trade within the West Bank. Ha'aretz noted that Israel hopes that the measures, announced ahead of a weekend visit by U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, will help blunt complaints it was not doing enough to bolster U.S.-backed peace talks and Salam Fayyad's "law and order" drive in the West Bank. Ha'aretz quoted a Palestinian official as saying that Barak was "forthcoming" on issues like roadblocks and deployment of Abbas's forces. Media reported that earlier on Wednesday opposition leader MK Benjamin Netanyahu slammed the decision. "The idea that we will give guns, armored vehicles, and ammunition to the PA as it exists today -- and these weapons will even protect us -- is not only mistaken, it is foolish," he said.

The Jerusalem Post quoted Israeli officials as saying on Wednesday that a new Israel National Police station will be opened next week in E-1, an area that has been the site of a bitter land dispute between Israelis and Palestinians.

Maariv cited the defense establishment's current belief that Hizbullah's new missiles have a 300-km range and that some of them are able to strike Dimona and its nuclear reactor.

The media reported that on Wednesday 15 to 20 Qassam rockets landed in the western Negev and that Palestinian snipers targeted Israeli farmers along the border with Gaza. Two persons were slightly injured. The media reported that on Wednesday Israeli security forces arrested a senior Hamas operative from Tulkarm, Omar Jaber, who reportedly played a key role in organizing the Passover-eve suicide bombing at Netanya's Park Hotel, six years ago today.

The Jerusalem Post and Maariv reported that the Israel Air Force is considering delaying delivery of the remaining F16I fighter plans that Lockheed Martin is supposed to supply, until an investigation into the discovery of carcinogenic material in one the planes is completed.

Leading media cited a statement released on Wednesday by ultra-Orthodox Ashkenazi rabbis, according to which harvesting the organs of a patient who has been declared brain-dead but whose heart has not stopped is "shedding of blood." The statement came in response to a law passed by the Knesset earlier this week governing the determination of brain and respiratory death criteria for declaring the patient dead. The law is to go into effect within 14 months. The statement was a veiled criticism of the support for the law of the senior Sephardic authority on Jewish law, Rabbi Ovadia

Yosef. Yosef backed the law based on understandings reached between representatives of the chief rabbinate and the health-care system.

Major media reported that environmental activists, including Environment Minister Gideon Ezra, are sponsoring a voluntary one-hour blackout of Tel Aviv tonight at 8:00 to demonstrate the waste of electricity. Similar actions have taken place in large cities around the world, including Chicago.

Maariv reported that on Wednesday IDF Chief of Staff Gabi Ashkenazi told the diplomatic-security cabinet that the army is short of "billions of shekels" to confront threats.

Leading media reported that on Wednesday, at a solidarity rally organized by the student union at Bar-Ilan University, Noam Shalit, the father of Gilad Shalit, blasted PM Olmert for his hesitance and failure to decide on the right action to gain his son's release.

Ha'aretz's web site reported that the government recently posted on YouTube three videos related to the terror attack at Jerusalem's Mercaz Harav Yeshiva earlier this month. Ha'aretz reported that while the poster was not identified as having any connection to the government, the Prime Minister's Office was actually behind the upload to the popular video file-sharing site. This is the first time that a government body has used the site in response to a terror attack. A source close to the latest measure has told Ha'aretz that Jerusalem will upload videos to YouTube in the event of any future terror attacks. Leading media reported that on Wednesday a senior rabbi urged "state-sanctioned revenge" against Arabs to bolster Israel's deterrence. Rabbi Shmuel Eliyahu, the Chief Rabbi of Safed, suggests hanging from a tree the children of the terrorist who carried out the attack at the yeshiva. He made his remarks in an article due to be distributed in synagogues this Shabbat in the Eretz Yisrael Shelanu ("Our Land of Israel") newsletter. Ha'aretz reported that Mossawa, the Advocacy Center for Arab Citizens of Israel, is demanding that Attorney General Menachem Mazuz censure Eliyahu over these comments and punish him "with the fullest severity of the law." Members of Meretz's youth wing urged Mazuz to investigate the rabbi and to prohibit the newsletter's distribution, while Reform Judaism officials also issued a harsh condemnation of Eliyahu's statement.

The Jerusalem Post reported that on Wednesday the UN Human Rights Council appointed American Jewish law professor Richard A. Falk -- who has compared Israel to the Nazis -- as special investigator on Israeli actions in the territories for a six-year term.

The Jerusalem Post reported that Khaled Salam, a former adviser to Yasser Arafat, is planning to invest some \$600 million in a tourist project in Jordan, prompting the PA leadership in Ramallah to launch an investigation into the sources of the money.

Major media reported that on Wednesday the Knesset decided that a parliamentary committee will discuss whether to recognize the World War I-era mass murder of Armenians by the Ottoman Empire as genocide. The government did not oppose the motion. The Knesset's House Committee will decide whether to hand the issue over to the Knesset's Education Committee, as Meretz's Haim Oron wants, or to the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, as requested by Yisrael Beiteinu's Yosef Shagal. The latter generally holds hearings behind closed doors. Israel Radio also cited the move. Ha'aretz quoted the Foreign Ministry as saying that a debate on the Armenian genocide might harm Israel-Turkey relations.

Maariv reported that on Tuesday a Kazakh court ruled that Israelis have trained forces to carry out a coup in the country.

Ha'aretz reviewed a new book ("The Man Who Pushed America to War") that describes the role of Iraqi politician Ahmad Chalabi in providing false intelligence about Saddam Hussein's military capability to the U.S. administration. The book also queries the contribution of Israeli intelligence to the formation of the U.S. conception that led to the Iraq War.

Yediot and other media reported that on Monday convicted spy Jonathan Pollard wrote PM Olmert that Olmert's bureau has stolen money coming to him and his family. Leading media quoted State Comptroller Micha Lindenstrauss as saying that accusations that his

investigation into the government's treatment of the Pollard affair will thwart Pollard's release are "surreal." Some media commented that Olmert is using the affair and its leak to Yediot to ram Lindenstrauss.

In an interview with Maariv, prominent Israeli director Daniel Barenboim for the first time criticized the Palestinians' actions.

The Jerusalem Post reported that on Wednesday Likud Chairman Benjamin Netanyahu publicly attacked the government for employing a "passive economic policy" amid the global financial crisis and a possible slowdown in the economy. Ha'aretz and The Jerusalem Post reported that the U.S.-based equity fund York Capital Management is buying a 4% stake in Bank Hapoalim, the largest Israeli bank, at a discount of about 4% compared with the opening price on the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange on Wednesday morning.

Ha'aretz reported that a bill calling for the creation of a third public school system combining Orthodox and secular education passed a preliminary reading in the Knesset on Wednesday. Such legislation would mark the first time since the state's founding that a public educational system has been established.

The Jerusalem Post and Makor Rishon-Hatzofe cited the Jewish Telegraphic Agency as saying that a Gallup poll among Jewish Democrats in the U.S. found that Senator Hillary Clinton would take 48% of the Jewish votes, while Senator Barack Obama would receive 43% of the Jewish votes.

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1. Mideast:  
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Summary:  
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Washington correspondent Shmuel Rosner wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "Bush is now behaving like a responsible adult, who is no longer looking for major headlines but only to pass on a policy that is worthy of continuing: in Iraq, in North Korea, and also in the Israeli-Palestinian corner of the Middle East. Hopefully, this is the case."

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "Does Russia really have an interest in Iran prevailing against the U.S.?.... If Russia were to take ... an about-face and join the side of peace, it would do more for peace than a thousand conferences."

Very liberal columnist Meron Benvenisti, deputy mayor of Jerusalem from 1971 to 1978, wrote in Ha'aretz: "'The environment' does not know ethnic fences.... But including the Palestinians in the Israeli environment ostensibly means annexation, or at least recognizing that the occupation is not temporary; that is how political disputes become enmeshed in ecological discourse."

Block Quotes:  
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1. "Drive Slowly"

Washington correspondent Shmuel Rosner wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (3/27): "Well-positioned persons note that Clinton passed down to his successor a dysfunctional peace process, a violent Intifada. The size of the abyss into which the two sides slid was commensurate to Clinton's ambition to bring an end to the conflict.... The outgoing president -- in 10 months -- intends to leave his successor the keys to a car in working order.... If the talks break down because of Jerusalem or the right of return, or the agreement of principles, the Roadmap path will also be blocked, which will be a reenactment of the Clinton mistake. Rice does not want to see this happen, nor does Bush. Seven years after taking office, the President is no longer a dangerous, inexperienced driver. Bush is now behaving like a responsible adult, who is no longer looking for major headlines but only to pass on a policy that is worthy of continuing: in Iraq, in North Korea, and also in the Israeli-Palestinian corner of the Middle East. Hopefully, this is the case."

## II. "Better than a Peace Conference"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (3/27): "To call the Russian approach to fostering peace in the region indelicate would probably be an understatement. 'Thuggish' is the word that comes to mind.... Moscow seems to be reprising the old Soviet policy of being weapons supplier to rogue states and sticking its finger in the eye of the West. How this is in the interest of today's Russia is difficult to imagine. What is clear, however, is that Israel should have no part of it. Russia is attempting to host a peace conference while protecting the main source of war: Iran.... This does not mean that Israel should oppose a constructive Russian role. On the contrary; Israel should make clear that it welcomes Russian involvement in isolating Iran, Syria, Hizbullah and Hamas. Russia cannot have it both ways.... Does Russia really have an interest in Iran prevailing against the U.S.? If not, Russia should truly join, not impede, the international campaign to force Iran to back down. If Russia were to take such an about-face and join the side of peace, it would do more for peace than a thousand conferences."

## III. "The Same Air, the Same Water"

Very liberal columnist Meron Benvenisti, deputy mayor of Jerusalem from 1971 to 1978, wrote in Ha'aretz (3/27): "'The environment' does not know ethnic fences.... But including the Palestinians in the Israeli environment ostensibly means annexation, or at least recognizing that the occupation is not temporary; that is how political disputes become enmeshed in ecological discourse.... This system -- called in sanitized language 'the occupation' -- is not a

military occupation, a takeover of lands and a temporary situation that will end when peace comes, but a permanent situation in which even those who are struggling to end it are partners in achieving its latent goal. The goal is for the Palestinians not to consolidate economic power that will 'steal' environmental resources from Israelis. That is the real goal of the regime of closures, the strangulation of physical planning, and especially the prevention of Palestinians from working in Israel: to ensure that the Palestinians remain in their backward condition. This will not pry away the environmental resources, which will remain an internal Israeli matter. It seems to Israelis that they have the power to maintain this monopoly on the environment indefinitely, but this is a dangerous illusion. After all, they do not have the power to stop Palestinian population growth or even the rise in their living standards, which will affect the bitter struggle we can expect over the distribution of environmental resources. Only if these influences become a part of public discourse will the way we deal with ecological issues be complete."

## 12. Intellectual Property Rights:

### Summary:

Jonathan Band, a copyright lawyer in Washington, D.C., and an adjunct professor at the Georgetown University Law Center wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: "The new [Israeli copyright] legislation contains many improvements, but one in particular -- the fair use provision -- will ensure that Israel remains among the world's technology leaders."

### Block Quotes:

"Israel Now Has the Right Copyright Law"

Jonathan Band, a copyright lawyer in Washington, D.C., and an adjunct professor at the Georgetown University Law Center wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (3/27): "In November 2007, the Knesset passed a new Copyright Law. The law, which takes effect in May of this year, replaces a legal framework dating back to the Mandatory period. The new legislation contains many improvements, but one in particular -- the fair use provision -- will ensure that Israel remains among the world's technology leaders.... The Knesset met this challenge by including in the new

law a 'fair use' provision modeled on the fair use doctrine in the U.S. Copyright Act.... U.S. entertainment interests and their Israeli affiliates opposed the fair use provision. They in essence feared that Israeli courts were not sophisticated enough to apply the fair use doctrine properly. Fortunately, the Economics Committee had more faith in the Israeli courts, and provided the new law with the flexibility essential for a vibrant technology sector."

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